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Female labour force participation reaches all-time high

Australia's female labour force participation rate reached an historic high of 60.5 per cent in January 2018, while the overall participation rate of 65.6 per cent in January was the highest since February 2011, according to latest figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today.

Program Manager for the ABS Labour and Income Branch Bjorn Jarvis said the trend unemployment rate for January remained steady at 5.5 per cent, where it has hovered for the past seven months.

"Australia's labour force participation rate continues to strengthen, reaching a new high for females in January and a seven-year high overall," Mr Jarvis said.

Employment and hours

The latest Labour Force figures show that monthly trend full-time employment increased for the 15th straight month in January 2018.

Full-time employment grew by a further 9,000 persons in January, while part-time employment increased by 14,000 persons, underpinning a total increase in employment of 23,000 persons.

Full-time employment has now increased by around 292,000 since January 2017 and makes up the majority of the 395,000 net increase in employment over the period. In line with the increasing female participation in the labour force, female full-time employment accounted for 55 per cent of the full-time employment growth over the past year.

Over the past year, trend employment increased by 3.3 per cent, which is above the average year-on-year growth over the past 20 years (1.9 per cent). "Prior to the past two months, the last time it was 3.3 per cent or higher was back in February 2008, before the Global Financial Crisis" Mr Jarvis said.

The trend monthly hours worked decreased slightly, by 1.2 million hours (0.1 per cent), with the annual figure continuing to show strong growth (2.7 per cent).

Unemployment

"The trend unemployment rate has fallen by 0.3 percentage points over the year but has been at approximately the same level for the past seven months, after the December 2017 figure was revised upward to 5.5 per cent."

States and Territories

Over the past year, the states and territories with the strongest annual growth in trend employment were the ACT (4.8 per cent) Queensland (4.7 per cent) and New South Wales (3.6 per cent).

All states and territories recorded a decrease in their trend unemployment rates, except the Northern Territory and the ACT (which increased 1.1 and 0.3 percentage points respectively).

Seasonally adjusted data

The seasonally adjusted number of persons employed increased by 16,000 in January 2018. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased by 0.1 percentage points to 5.5 per cent and the labour force participation rate decreased to 65.6 per cent.

More information can be found in the January 2018 issue of Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0), which is the 500th issue of this publication.

Additional information, including regional labour market information, can be found in the upcoming January 2018 issue of Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001), due for release on 22 February 2018.

These publications are available for free download (after release) from the ABS website: <https://www.abs.gov.au>.

Media note:

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- For media requests and interviews, contact the ABS Communications and Partnerships Section on 1300 175 070 (8.30am - 5pm Monday - Friday AEST).
- The ABS produces trend estimates to provide a more reliable indicator of the underlying behaviour of the Labour Force series. Trend estimates were introduced into the Labour Force series in the mid 1980s and are available back to February 1978. Trend estimates are considered the best indicators of the underlying behaviour in the labour market. See paragraphs 28 to 37 of the Explanatory Notes in Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0).
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